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Christian Education

IN THE

First Centuries

(A. D. 33—A. D. 476)

BY THE

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Reprinted by permission from the American Catholic Quarterly Review, April, 1898.

NEW YORK:
THE CATHEDRAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION,
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INTRODUCTION.

In this brochure Father Magevney with his wonted charm and felicitous style sketches in broad outline the beginnings of Christian Education. His references to the illustrious Alexandrian School will, it is hoped, excite the desire in many of knowing more about that famous institution of Christian learning, and stimulate to a deeper study of the greater books mentioned. We are pleased to note that the booklet is a refutation of the misrepresentations of Hallam. By thus exposing another of the false lights of modern pedagogical literature, Father Magevney has added another link to the chain of pedagogical truth.

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Christian Education in the First Centuries.

A. D. 33—A. D. 476.

IT was upon the summit of Olivet, at the moment of his Ascension into heaven, that the Saviour of the world gave his disciples their commission to teach all nations: "*Euntes docete.*" Thoroughly imbued with the spirit which his words imparted, they set forth upon their great work of universal civilization and reform. As we survey the checkered retrospect of the ages that have since elapsed, and philosophize upon the marvelous transformation which their efforts effected, we cannot but be profoundly impressed by the vitality of Christian truth and its unmistakable mission in the life and character and affairs of mankind. Like the tiny mustard-

seed of which he had once spoken in parable, its beginnings were scant and literally "underground"; but in the sunlight of Divine favor and watchfulness it soon sprouted into a mighty tree, sheltering all the world and scattering its benedictions far and wide. Wherever intelligent minds and responsive hearts were to be found, there it was also to be met with, pleading for acceptance as against the tangled mysticism and confused follies of a paganism which it was eventually to supplant. In Greece, in Britain, in Gaul, in Spain, in distant Asia and Africa—everywhere, in fact, were multitudes of Christians whose noble lives and deaths bore eloquent testimony to the genuineness of the early instruction which they had received. So rapid was the spread of the new teaching; so tenacious its hold; so redoubtable the fortress behind which it was intrenched, that in less than a hundred years it had become a prominent factor in the social and moral, and, we may also add, in the politi-

cal development and destiny of the Empire. "At the commencement of the second century," writes Saint Justin, "there is no people among whom we do not find believers in Jesus Christ." Such is the universally admitted historical fact. And as we pause to moralize upon it, we naturally ask where and from whom did this numerous throng acquire the knowledge of those prolific principles which had wrought such a wonderful transformation in their lives, and which they were only too glad to possess as a substitute for the teachings of the Academy and the Lyceum. To the casual observer, nothing unusual had transpired. The great Roman world moved on as before. The Cæsar sat upon his throne. The profane multitudes revelled in the bloody spectacles of the amphitheatre. The public marts re-echoed to the customary hum of traffic. The forum was the scene of competition as brisk and sharp as in the days of Cicero and Hortensius. Yet despite the outward seeming a tremendous

change had come over the spirit of their wakening no less than of their dream. Where, then, were the teachers and where the institutions at whose hands and within whose precincts those athletes of the new Gospel were trained? Writers upon the early Christian schools pass over in almost absolute silence the first half of the first century, assigning as their reason for so doing the total absence of historical documents. While we do not condemn the wisdom of their course when there is question of a formal treatise on the subject, we do not propose to imitate them in our present consideration. Dialecticians assure us that it is quite logical to reason from known effects to the nature of unknown causes; and applying the principle to the fact of which we have just spoken, that is to say, the rapid and widespread dissemination of Christian doctrine, we arrive at various conclusions not less interesting than reliable.

First, there is no doubt that whatever education was bestowed upon

the early Christians was of a purely *domestic* character. "Every house," says Saint Chrysostom, "was a church." In the deep seclusion of the catacombs, in the privacy of the family circle, in some secret and commodious retreat upon the grounds of a rich patron recently converted to the faith, the Christians gathered, and there, together, read and prayed, while they taught their children the elements of sacred knowledge. The reason for these precautions was, of course, the persecutions to which they were constantly exposed in Jerusalem and Antioch, no less than in Rome. It was a crime to be a Christian, and such as professed Christianity openly did so at the peril of their lives. Even in the heart of the earth they were not safe, and more than one instance is on record of how Jewish vindictiveness and Roman savagery tracked them even there. Hence the profound reserve with which they veiled all their proceedings. They wrote and spoke in symbols; and it is not to be won-

dered at that their educational methods, if we may use the phrase, are as little known to us as the other features of their hidden life. Furthermore, another new and distinctive trait of their teaching was that *it was for all equally*. This was a departure in the history of education. Until the coming of Christ, knowledge had been looked upon as the exclusive privilege and right of the higher classes. And this because it was viewed as a matter of State, whose principal if not sole object was to qualify its possessor for some public trust, political, civil, or priestly. But with Christ it was quite different. His teaching, no less than his redemption, was for every one alike, Gentile as well as Jew, bond as well as free. Hence the beautiful spectacle that so often presents itself, in the scenes of those distant days, of the rich and poor, of the noble and the plebeian, the master and the serf, intermingling in the sweet intimacy of children of one and the same household. "See how they love

one another," expresses it exactly. Baptised at the same font, fed at the same table of life, it was under the same conditions that they drank of the well-spring of wisdom. Saint Paul's tender solicitude for the slave Onesimus, as pictured in his letter to Philemon, is an index of the situation as it was in his day and had been from the beginning.

Again, the teaching of the first Christians, as far as we know, was confined to *religious instruction*. It was in the nature of the case that it should have been so. They could not without danger to their souls as well as their bodies frequent the pagan schools of their times. Besides, it was all important, in view of the special difficulties of the situation, that they should become thoroughly imbued with the maxims of that Gospel of which they were to be the first witnesses and exponents. By comparison with the delights which it afforded, pagan learning could have had no charm for them; neither could it have been of any

use so long as they had cast their lot with a system in virtue of which they were ostracized from all human society. If, as some will have it, their pupils dipped occasionally into the works of pagan authors, it could only have been as a matter of individual and rare experiment, and was conducted with all the supervision and safeguards which their exceptional zeal and holiness of life would naturally suggest.[1] Let us not suppose, however, that the instruction bestowed upon early converts to the faith because exclusively religious, was at all barren or superficial. Cardinal Hergenrother, in his interesting work upon "Primitive Christi-

1 Even as late as the fourth century we find the Fathers of the Church antagonizing one another on this very point. But the reasons adduced in support of the study of pagan authors at that late date could have had no force when applied to the opening years of the Christian era; that is to say, as long as the persecutions lasted. The time had not yet come when Origen could write to Gregory Thaumaturgus; "We are permitted when we go out of Egypt to carry with us the riches of the Egyptians, wherewith to adorn the tabernacle." The time had not yet come when the brilliancy of the Alexandrian school and the polemical acumen of its immortal professors were to give Christianity a standing never to be gainsaid or undone. The Patristic age, too, which even Guizot admits to have been the brightest literary period since the dawn of religion, was still a thing of the remote future.

anity," which, as he himself informs us, is scarcely more than an excerpt from De Rossi's monumental treatise on the catacombs, rehearses the points of doctrine with which they were familiar. His enumeration covers in substance the essential field of dogmatic theology; God the Creator, the Trinity, the Angels, man and his fall, the leading events and personages of the Old Testament, the coming of Christ, the mysteries and chief happenings of his life, the four Gospels, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Church, the Primacy, the Seven Sacraments, and that epitome of Christian revelation, the Apostles' Creed. All this and much else that had to do with the virtues, with the acts of the early martyrs, and the liturgical practices of those days, was taught to them carefully; and, as if to grave it upon their memories, was traced in mysterious outlines upon the walls and diptychs of their subterranean abodes. True, the life of the early Christian was a diversified one. Not every day was a rainy

day. Persecution did not rage continuously. Not every city was Rome or Jerusalem or Antioch, and, for all we know, their condition in some quarters may have been favorable enough to have allowed them to live and teach in public. Let us refrain from saying so, however, since to assert it were merely to surmise. But whilst, in their educational life, we behold no trace of schools in the common acceptation of the term, we can discern the germ element of two features which were to play a prominent part in the historical growth of Christian education in after centuries. We allude to the practice of community life, and the custom which prevailed with the Apostles and their immediate Episcopal successors of gathering around them as pupils, and often as members of their own households, such young men as they deemed it advisable to qualify for the sacred ministry. In the one we recognize the monastic principle at work; in the other the far-off dawnings of a system which, with

varying fortunes, was to lead up to the Episcopal or Cathedral Schools of the Middle Ages and the Seminaries of modern times.[1] And this is all of education we discover any vestige of in the earliest infancy of the Church—the inculcation in secret of the tenets of the faith to children and catechumens when and where the vicissitudes of the time would

1 It is noteworthy that the custom of living together was not merely forced upon the first Christians by stress of circumstances and the imperative need which they felt of combining for mutual comfort and support, but was adopted in imitation of the Saviour himself, who had organized his Apostles, and for that matter all of his disciples, into a family of which he was the father, the director, the teacher. In the desert, upon the lake-shore, upon the mountain, in the vestibule of the temple, upon the highways and by-ways, it was "the multitude" that was gathered around him. And so speedily and fully did this idea commend itself, and so general had the practice become, that the very hermits in the desert, long before the advent of monasticism, felt the necessity of it, and at stated intervals met together for prayer, or reading, or pious conversation. Thus up to Christ, through the first Christians and the Apostles themselves, is the canonical rule of life distinctly traceable. Hence with truth could Saint Augustine say in after years, in reply to certain attacks made upon him by the Donatists for having established a community of regular clergy, that, "While the name of monastery is new, the manner of life which we adopt is coeval with Christianity itself." In like manner the Apostles gathered around them their young students destined to aid and succeed them in the ministry. For instance, we are told that Saint Peter was assisted by a chosen band of companions, of whom the names of Saint Mark, Saint Clement, Saint Evodius and Saint Linus have come down to us. Tradition has also preserved the memory of the numerous disciples of Saint John, notably of Polycarp and Papias, who sojourned with him at Ephesus, where the declining years of his life were spent.

allow, and the private schools which centered around the Apostles and first bishops, and whose purpose was distinctly ecclesiastical.

It was not until the flourishing period of the Alexandrian Academies, under the presidency of Saint Pantaenus, and as late as A. D. 181, that we observe any departure from the exclusively domestic methods which, until then, had been the vogue. These Academies or Catechetical Schools, as they were generally called, were already more than a hundred years old when Pantaenus appeared on the scene. Their origin, according to Saint Jerome, dates from Saint Mark, the Evangelist, who, upon the dispersion of the Apostles, had been sent by Saint Peter to preach in Egypt. He arrived at Alexandria in the seventh year of the reign of Nero and the sixtieth of the Christian era. At the time, "Alexandria, the beautiful," as she was called, was not only one of the commercial emporiums of the world, but its literary capital as well.

The combined civilizations of the East and West had poured into her lap the garnered fruits of years of uninterrupted social and political advance. The proud Roman, the subtle Greek, the opulent Jew, traders from Syria, India, Arabia and Ethiopia, no less than the native Egyptian, found it to their respective interests to live within her borders, and be made participants in the countless advantages which she alone could offer. But her material prosperity was not to be the secret of her greatest renown. Her schools and university, generously patronized by the savants and youthful *literati* of foreign lands, were to immortalize her yet more.[1] They afforded every facility for the acquisition of that broad and deep intellectual culture which forms such a marked feature in the mental structure of her many distinguished scholars. Literature, art and science—all that went to con-

1 For a beautiful account of the Alexandrian University or "Museum," see Newman's *Historical Sketches*, vol. iii., c. viii.; also Allies' *Church and State*, p. 355. For an account of the Church of Alexandria, see Newman's *Arians*, sect. iii.

stitute a liberal education, was within her gift; while the stimulus which she gave to investigation in the upper fields of thought was to make itself felt throughout all subsequent ages. Under the patronage of the first Ptolemies, and until Roman oppression had dimmed the lustre of her ancient glory, scholarship was in good and universal repute. The old philosophies had ripened to their fullest in the sunshine of her royal favor. The abstractions of Plato, the speculations of Aristotle, the "mystical rationalism" of Philo, and, later on, the Neo-Platonic vagaries of Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus, found in her midst an atmosphere most congenial for the exercise of whatever activity they possessed. The Christian element alone was wanting in the frame-work of her intellectual build, and it was supplied by the advent of the Evangelist, Saint Mark. As we have already observed, whatever teaching was done, owing to an always present danger, was bestowed in secret; and

that not only in Rome but in the Provinces, and wherever the zeal and enterprise of early converts had carried the Christian name. Saint Mark seems to have adopted the same prudential measure in his new and fertile field. Six years after his arrival, that is to say, A. D. 66, and about thirty years after the dispersion of the Apostles, the first general persecution broke out at Rome under Nero, and doubtless rendered it advisable, in a cosmopolitan centre like Alexandria, for Christians to be more than ordinarily circumspect, and pursue their vocation secludedly until the storm had ceased to threaten. Certain it is, even in default of historical testimony, that the catechetical schools were multiplied rapidly from his day onward, steadily radiating from his Episcopal See to all quarters of the East. It was traditional in Saint Jerome's time, towards the close of the fourth century, A. D. 375, that Saint Mark had made it a point to group about him the most eminent scholars he could find

equally skilled in sacred and profane learning. These he perfected under his own eyes and sent forth to repeat the work, which they had learnt from him, by the organization of similar schools elsewhere. We can see no reason to discredit the tradition. The numerous schools which, a century later, leaped to the surface within the very shadow of the university and in the principal cities of Egypt, Syria and Arabia, when temporary peace was granted to the Church, all fashioned upon the Alexandrian model, as well as the many distinguished converts from paganism who had come under their saving influence, spoke volumes in their praise, and indicated not only that the schools had existed, but also that their thoroughness testified to long years of painstaking and systematic development. They threw upon the field, on the first favorable opportunity, a fully-equipped army of representative scholars to assault, and that in public, the very strongholds of pagan philosophy and prejudice—like some

titanic force, slumbering and yet alive, within the bosom of the earth, in silent expectation of the day and hour of its overwhelming manifestation. As to the method of instruction adopted by Saint Mark and his successors down to Saint Pantaenus, that is to say, for the first hundred years, we are not historically informed. Writers upon the subject, however, surmise, and with considerable show of truth, that it was, if not the same, at least very much like that pursued by the Christian teachers in Jerusalem, of which we have some record, and where we are told: "the catechumens were assembled in the porch of the church, the men and women sitting apart from one another, and the Master standing to deliver his instruction." The matter of the instruction was always confined to the doctrines of faith, and was treated catechetically or apologetically, and beyond this neither the first schools at Alexandria or elsewhere seem to have gone.

It was in the year 181 that Saint Pantaenus, successor to Athenagoras, succeeded to the presidency of the Alexandrian Academy, over which he presided for ten years. He was in all likelihood a Sicilian by birth, a convert from Stoicism, a man of superior attainments and celebrated amongst the gentile philosophers of his day. His entrance upon office was contemporaneous with a transitional period in the history of Christianity. The dreadful persecution which had been raging, we may say uninterruptedly, since the days of Saint Mark, had abated. The lull in the storm only spurred the Christians to redoubled efforts in the interests of religion. Naturally enough, their activity manifested itself nowhere more conspicuously than in and about the catechetical schools of Alexandria. Pantaenus felt that the moment was auspicious. Being in every sense what in modern parlance we would describe as "a man of the times," and, therefore, keenly alive to the needs of the situation, he was

persuaded that the hour had come for Christianity to make somewhat of a departure from the extremely conservative methods hitherto pursued. The light of the world had been long enough under a bushel. He would set it upon a mountain, that "nations might walk in its splendor and kings in the brightness of its rising." The magnificent deposit of Divine truth which had been whispered in secret, and which had shunned, as contamination, all alliance with profane knowledge, he and his learned *confrères* would proclaim from the house-top, while they threw down the gauntlet of debate to the proud philosophers of the University, whether Platonist, Peripatetic or Eclectic, who fancied that in the speculations of Plato and Aristotle they had reached the "Ultima Thule" of human investigation. The schools, which had hitherto been only for the Christians, were now thrown open to all indiscriminately. The result is easily imagined, Heterogeneous throngs upon throngs

packed the lecture-halls, attracted thither by the growing reputation and held enchained by the lofty eloquence of the speakers, and most of all by the sublime truths which, for the first time, they heard enunciated, and which were in strange contrast with the scientific vagaries to which they had been accustomed. Men of the superb calibre of Titus Flavius Clemens, better known in Christian annals as Clement of Alexandria, and whom Saint Jerome eulogizes as the most learned writer of the Church, were set thinking, and could not, as a result of their logical reflections, but prefer the Personal God of the Christians to the hazy "emanations" of Plotinus; the usefulness of a theological system which had a practical bearing, and intimately affected the morals of men, to "Platonic myths and Pythagorean theories of mortification," whose pursuit invariably terminated in dissatisfaction and confusion. Philo, at the very dawn of the Christian era, had sought to reconcile, and even identify, in a com-

mon origin, the writings of Moses and Plato, and out of his endeavor sprang the short-lived compromise of Neo-Platonism—"the Puseyism of Paganism," as it has been styled. That which he attempted for the Old Testament the Christian Doctors of Alexandria did in a measure for the New. They harmonized Pagan with Gospel science in this sense, that they pointed out to their eager listeners what was admirable and tenable in Pagan writers, demonstrating how the higher truths of Christianity were a necessary complement, and that, if they would have their investigations terminate in something better than mistiness and discouragement, they must press them beyond the horizon of the Natural into the realm of the Supernatural; from the domain of pure reason into that of faith and revelation. In short, that human wisdom at best was only the handmaid of Christian theology. As Saint Paulinus subsequently and in other connections wrote to Jovius: "You need not

abandon your philosophy if you will but hallow it by faith and employ it wisely by uniting it to religion." With this maxim as a basic principle of operation, the Alexandrian Catechists could and did handle the ancient authors with impunity, making it clear that whatever beauties they possessed were, after all, only the broken gleams and scattered fragments of the one infinite and incommensurate Truth, whose logical and adequate expression was the Christian concept of the Godhead, and whose visible actuality was none other than the Word made Flesh. Like fire when it seizes upon stubble, the new truths and the fame of the new teachers swept throughout Alexandria — throughout all Egypt; wherever, in fact, Egyptian ships and caravans wafted the renown of her enterprise and commerce. The truth had ceased to be a thing of the closet—a mere exotic. Its champions were to be met with everywhere, pushing its claims and making sad havoc of the traditional follies to

which even the wiseacres were clinging. In season and out of season, upon the busy thoroughfares of the city or in the lecture-rooms of the University or *Sarapeion;* in the libraries and gardens, and upon the public drives and crowded wharves —in all places and at all times they were to be found teaching, and, by dint of the most compact logic, opening up entire vistas of unexplored verities for the contemplation of the ripest geniuses of the day. The harvest was bending for the sickle. The laborers, though necessarily few, were multiplying daily, and the necessary result was large and constant accessions from all grades and classes of society to the ranks of the Christian fold. We are not to suppose, however, that the work of the Alexandrian school was confined to argument with pagan *literati* and philosopher. That were an injustice to its saintly professors and to the spirit of its Apostolic founder which still hovered about its precincts. Though it was the most conspicuous,

it was by no means the only or even the principal work. The catechetical classes for catechumens and children were its most efficient features. While Pantaenus and his successor Clement, and later on Origen, met the learned Pagan upon his own ground and lectured upon the most recondite subjects, numerous well-trained disciples were appointed to look after the interests of simpler minds. Eusebius expressly narrates, and it were easy to infer it without being told, that Origen divided his school into two sections, one for the more advanced and another for beginners; understanding by beginners not merely, as some have done, adult converts from Paganism, but also, as Fleury insists, children.[1] For, while

1 But when he (Origen) saw that he was not adequate at the same time to the more intense study of divine things and to the interpretation of the Scriptures, and in addition to the instruction of the Catechumens, who scarcely allowed him to draw breath, one coming after another, from morning till night, to be taught by him, he divided the multitude, and selected Heraclas, one of his friends, who was devoted to the study of the Scriptures, and in other respects also a most learned man, not unacquainted with philosophy, and associated him with himself in the office of instruction. To him, therefore, he committed the elementary initiation of those that were yet to be taught the first beginning, or rudiments, but reserved for himself lecturing to those that were more familiar with the subject.—Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*, b. vi., c. 15.

it is true that the character of the instruction was generally better suited to persons of age, it is a mistake to suppose that it was all of one description The Alexandrian school continued to prosper steadily for twenty-two years, from A. D. 180 to A. D. 202. It was then, and while Saint Clement was in charge, that the fifth general persecution under Septimus Severus broke out. The schools in Alexandria and elsewhere were closed. Their pupils and teachers were disbanded. The persecution raged incessantly until A.D. 211, the year of the Emperor's death at York, in Britain. He was succeeded by Caracalla, and peace was once more restored. Clement, on the breaking out of the persecution, had retired to Cappadocia, where he died in the year 217. We are in ignorance as to whether he ever returned to Alexandria or not. Meanwhile the illustrious Origen, then only eighteen years of age, was called upon to pilot the destinies of the school after its reorganization, which he

continued to do for twenty years, until A. D. 231, when he resigned his post and left Alexandria forever. It was not to discontinue the work of teaching, though, for we soon find him at Caesarea, in Palestine, at the head of another institution, modeled upon the Alexandrian pattern. At the time Caesarea was an important religious and intellectual centre, and with the exception of Alexandria and Antioch, compared favorably with the other cities of the East. This offshoot of the Alexandrian school was but one out of many similar educational foundations emanating from the same source, and animated by one and the same principle and spirit. As further examples we may mention those at Jerusalem, Edessa, Antioch, and, somewhat later, at Nisibis in Armenia, and at Sidon.

How long the Catechetical School of Alexandria flourished is a matter of historical conjecture. The more common opinion is that it lasted, in itself or its ramifications, until the middle and possibly the close of the

fourth century. The period of its greatest *eclat* was that during which it was administered by Pantaenus, Clement and Origen; for after theirs, no name of equal distinction appears upon its roll of masters. Of Origen's immediate successors, the names of Heraclas, Dionysius the bishop, Saint Pierius,[1] Achillas, Theognostus, Serapion and Peter the Martyr, have been preserved. Various reasons, more or less plausible, have been adduced for the gradual decadence of the school. The departure of Origen, its brightest light, to other fields, and the establishment by him of a similar institution at Caesarea, would naturally rob it of some of its quondam prestige, and divide with it pub-

1 We have mentioned Saint Pierius as head of the Catechetical school of Alexandria upon the authority of Rohrbacher—an authority, however, with which the Bollandists are at variance. They say: "Quæcunque disputata sunt de tempore quo Pierius potuit regere Scholam Alexandrinam ad hoc reducuntur, quod legenti satis patuerit, ut ostensum sit nullatenus deesse in hucusque nota præfectorum serie intervallum quod Pierii praefecturae attribuatur. At illud sane non sufficit, ut probetur eum revera hoc munus exercuisse neque ulterius progressi sumus a conclusione enuntiata in fine num. 15, nimirum non deesse quædam indicia quibus innuatur Pierius Catechetarum scholæ præsedisse, sed argumenta quæ rem plane evincant praesto non esse." *Acta Sanctorum*, Novem. Tom. ii, pars prim., pg. 260.

lic patronage and attention. Besides, and we deem this a more valid reason, it had served its time and purpose in the providence of God. It was, after all, only a phase in what was to be an interminable process of educational development. That it was an improvement upon the primitive and elementary condition in which Christian education found itself during the early years of the century, no one will gainsay. Where the proselytizing of the first Christians had been mainly amongst the Jews, the doors of the Catechetical school stood open for all alike, irrespective of race and caste. Where the matter, at the beginning was confined to the doctrines of religion, the teachings of the Alexandrians covered, in addition, the entire field of pagan research, scientific as well as literary. They could descant upon the charms of Homer and Virgil and rout the fallacies of Plato with the same dexterity and grace with which they interpreted a chapter of Genesis or taught the youngest of

their children to make the sign of the cross. And to their everlasting credit be it said that they were the first who brought the wisdom of the pagan to the steps of the altar and made it kneel down and adore. Moreover, the critical situation in which the first Christians were placed made them, as a matter of self-preservation, seek seclusion and retirement. The altered condition in which the Alexandrians found themselves at the beginning of the third century solicited them to the front, and prompted them in the interests of truth and salvation to put on what Saint Paul characterizes as "the armor of light." The result was a period of marvelous growth and activity in the Church, and the almost instantaneous creation of a generation of apologists and controversialists hardly equaled and certainly never surpassed before or since. The writings of Saint Pantaenus, which are lost, though we are told they were voluminous, and those of Clement and Ori-

gen, which have survived, will more than bear out the truth of this statement. It was a phase, then, a transition, and nothing more natural than that it should yield to the broader and fuller policy ushered in by the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great, in the year 313. Before passing to the consideration of his reign and the world-wide transformation which it effected in the educational status of the Christian Church, for with that alone are we concerned, let us pause to remark that the school development of the century and a half that had preceded was by no means confined to Alexandria or the numerous schools of which it was the admitted and honored parent. The facilities which it afforded were not within the reach of all. Hence it was that, stimulated by its brilliant example, a kindred zeal had taken possession of the guardians of the flock elsewhere, and the interests of education were steadily advanced. Rome had its Christian school; and that religion had es-

poused learning there, the names of Apollonius, Tatian and Justin Martyr abundantly attest. Athens had its school and its scholars also, who, like the Great Apostle, had hurried thither to announce to the inquisitive Greek the wonderful works and ways of the "unknown God." Carthage had its school and could furnish its quota of erudite and zealous Christian teachers, as the names of Tertullian and Cyprian sufficiently prove. Nor was this zeal for the diffusion of Christian teaching confined to the East. There were many in the West who, in the matter of schools, were emulating the work of the Alexandrians. To the names already mentioned we may add those of Minutius Felix, Arnobius and Lactantius, all of them of the ante-Nicene period (A. D. 325). In accentuating the work of the Alexandrian Academy and its connections, therefore, we would not be understood as insinuating that all this while the faithful elsewhere were comparatively idle. Far from it. But the condition of

public affairs in other quarters, for one reason or another, was so unsettled as to render anything like organization for corporate and continued educational purposes out of the question. In Rome, for instance, it was an almost unbroken persecution on the part of barbarous emperors, who, when they did not attack religion, found vent for their iniquity in the wholesale assaults which they made upon scholarship and scholars. Tacitus in his "Agricolæ Vita," years before, had lamented the decline and almost complete extinction of literary endeavor, owing to the inhumanity and immorality of men in power who could not understand, much less appreciate, the mission of science and literature as elements of growth in the evolution of a nation's life.[1] The same continued to be more

1 At mihi nunc narraturo vitam defuncti hominis, venia opus fuit; quam non petissem, ni cursaturus tam sæva et infesta virtutibus tempora. Legimus, cum Aruleno Rustico Pætus Thrasea, Herennio Senecioni Priscus Helvidius laudati essent capitale fuisse: neque in ipsos modo auctores, sed in libros quoque eorum sævitum, delegato triumviris ministerio, ut monumenta clarissimorum ingeniorum in comitio ac foro urerentur. Scilicet illo igne vocem populi Romani et libertatem senatus et conscientiam generis humani aboleri arbitrabantur, expulsis insuper sapientiæ professoribus atque omni bona arte in exilium acta, ne quid usquam honestum occurreret. Dedimus profecto grande patientiæ documentum: et sicut vetus ætas vidit quid ultimum in libertate esset, ita nos quid in servitute, adempto per inquisitiones, et loquendi audiendique commercio. Memoriam quoque ipsam cum voce perdidissemus, si tam in nostra potestate esset oblivisci, quam tacere. *Agricolæ Vita*, c. ii.

or less the case long after his time. Alexandria alone seemed to combine the available conditions. The intellectual life focussed in her University; the high order of scientific speculation which had been in progress there for centuries, aided and encouraged by the beneficent generosity of her rulers; the sharp competition bound to follow as a consequence of so many bright minds coming together, all this and more made her a veritable hive of activity, where the truth could work marvels if it could only declare itself at the hands of proper interpreters and upon the most judicious lines of presentation. That it did so we have seen—though we have also seen how checkered was its career, even in a soil so promising. Thus as early as the third century, thanks to the enterprising spirit of the Alexandrians, whatever learning there was that was worth the having was within reach of the Christians. In consequence, the intellectual qualifications looked for in a Christian gentleman

of those days were neither mean nor few. They are thus summarized by the accomplished author of "Christian Schools and Scholars": "In addition to the elements of education," she says, "we see that at the beginning of the third century Christians were expected to teach and study the liberal arts, profane literature, philosophy and the biblical languages. Their teachers commented on the Scripture, and devoted themselves to a critical study of its text; positive theology, as it is called, had established itself in the schools, together with a certain systematic science of Christian ethics; and, we may add, many branches of physical science also. It matters very little that these latter were imperfectly known; the real point worth observing is that every branch of human knowledge, in so far as it had been cultivated at that time, was included in the studies of the Christian schools; and considering that this had been the work of scarcely more than two centuries, and those

centuries of bloody persecution, it must be acknowledged to have been a tolerably expansive growth."[1] This picture which she draws of the condition of things at the opening took on deeper colors and a more perfect delineation as the century advanced, in despite of endless obstruction. All that was needed for the perfect development of Christian education was an uninterrupted peace for the Church, and in the providence of God its coming was to be no longer delayed.

Naturally enough, the entrance upon office of Constantine the Great, in the year 306, and the new policy which he inaugurated, boded well for the future of Christianity. The kindly feelings which he had manifested prior to his accession to the throne had filled the Christians with hope. Nor were they doomed to disappointment. In the year 313 he issued from Milan his decree of toleration, the effect of which was to put them upon a social and political level

1 *Christian Schools and Scholars*, p. 10.

with their whilom pagan persecutors. And whatever his defects as a man or a prince, one thing is certain: his authority, exercised in its fulness and perseveringly, broke the fetters which had hampered the free development of Christian education, and set it upon a basis from which neither the traditional prejudice of paganism nor the malicious antagonism of men in power, such as Julian the Apostate, was able subsequently to shake it. "I wish my century," he wrote to Optatianus, "to afford an easy access to eloquence, and render a friendly testimony to serious studies." With this object in view, he threw open for the accommodation of all, irrespective of creed, the public schools of the Empire, using his authority freely in the endeavor to render them as efficient as possible. Christians were even allowed to teach in them, and some, perhaps many, availed themselves of the privilege, notwithstanding the opposition manifested in certain quarters to the practice. A word upon their history.

Public schools had made their appearance in the state as early as the days of Julius Cæsar, B. C. 60, when at least thirty could be counted. They were not at the start a recognized civil institution, but private enterprises, conducted in the interest of individual pedagogues or Grammatici. Their curriculum embraced simply the elements, though there are evidences that in some cases they were more pretentious. It was not until the time of Vespasian, A.D. 69, that what were known as the imperial schools or "Auditoria" took their rise in Rome and in many of the provincial towns of note. They were of royal foundation, and were intended for the pursuit of higher studies. At least a two year's course in fundamentals was presupposed to admission. Confined at first to rhetoric and grammar, they gradually enlarged their scope until philosophy, medicine, jurisprudence, Latin and Greek, literature, astrology, and whatever was known of other sciences, were included amongst the

branches taught. Their professors were appointed by the emperors, were well paid for their services, and, in view of their dignity, enjoyed various immunities and emoluments. Amongst the most celebrated of these schools may be mentioned those at Besançon, Arles, Cologne, Rheims, Treves, Toulouse, Clermont, Narbonne, Vienne, Bordeaux and Lyons. Those at Marseilles and Autun seem to have been the earliest, having been established by Greek colonies at some very remote and unkown date. Both Cicero and Tacitus allude to their antiquity. The most famous of the imperial schools, a sort of metropolitan university, with regard to all of them, was the Athenæum or *Schola Romana*, established by the Emperor Adrian, A.D. 117–A.D. 138. It flourished until the time of the Christian Emperors. It was built in the capital, and its whole conception seems to have been suggested by the Museum or University of Alexandria, already mentioned. It had "ten chairs for Latin gram-

mar, ten for Greek, three for Latin rhetoric, five for Greek, one–some say three–for philosophy, two or four for Roman law; professorships of medicine were also added. . . . . Under grammar were included knowledge of language and metre, criticism and history." The studies of a Roman youth began with elements at the age of seven. Having completed his primary course, he was sent at fourteen to the Athenæum or other public academy for the cultivation of oratory, mathematics, philosophy and law. At the age of twenty he was supposed to have finished his studies, though even that time was prorogued for five years in favor of those who desired to pursue letters or jurisprudence as specialties. As a result of the facilities which these institutions for higher education afforded, multitudes of students, when they had completed their studies in the provincial districts, flocked to Rome in quest of its exceptional advantages. They hailed from Spain and Gaul and Africa; and not a few

of them, foreigners though they were, have by their immortal writings shed a glory upon the history of Roman literature. Thus from Spain came the two Senecas, Lucan, Martial and Quintilian. From Gaul, Ausonius and Sidonius Apollinaris. From Africa, Arnobius, Lucius Apulius and Aurelius Victor. The massing together of so many young men at one point was, of course, fraught with great danger, moral danger especially, to themselves and no end of annoyance to public authorities. Accordingly we find that the legislation regarding them was both plentiful and stringent. They were required to bring from the provincial governor of the locality from which they came proper testimonials of introduction and recommendation. They were to be under constant surveillance during their stay at the metropolis, and, in case of flagrant misdemeanor, were to be publicly beaten with rods and sent home. They were amenable to the civil officers, who were required to furnish the Emperor with monthly

reports, giving all necessary information regarding the number of students in attendance, their homes and condition, their progress, their conduct, with the names of the latest arrivals, as also of those who, their time having expired, were to be sent back whence they came. The rules governing the professors were equally strict. To the advantages which these schools afforded, many a Christian champion, like Tertullian, Jerome, Basil, Augustine and Gregory, owed the brilliant classical training which they brought with them into the Church. This system of imperial schools lasted until the end of the seventh century in Gaul, Italy, Spain, and in every part of the Roman world. "In Italy," says Ozanam, "till the eleventh century, lay teachers pursued their course side by side with the ecclesiastical schools, as if to unite the end of the old imperial system to the origin of that of the universities, and especially to the University of Bologna, which, in spite of the difference from

one another and from the old schools of the Empire, perpetuated the public methods of antiquity through a privileged professoriate and an universally accessible system of instruction.[1]"

When Christianity became under Constantine the religion of the Empire, these public schools were opened to Christians, though they still retained the "old methods, subjects of instruction, and, to a very considerable extent, the old spirit." Paganism was not to be so easily dislodged, and in spite of the efforts of Christian Emperors, notably Constantine, Valentinian, Gratian, Honorius and Theodosius, the old civilization, with its admixture of good and evil, still clung to its ancient haunts. Its struggle for a more protracted life against Christianity, which it viewed as an intruder, manifested itself nowhere more violently than in the class-room. Hence the animated controversy which arose amongst the rulers of the Church as to the advis-

1 *Civilization in the Fifth Century*, vol. i, p. 195

ability, not to say permissibility, of allowing Christian children to attend such institutions where a three-fold danger seemed to threaten them—the paganism of the text-books, of their companions, and of their teachers. As we follow the discussion, and it is well worth the following, since it was a typical "battle of the giants," we are reminded that school controversies, even within the Church, are by no means an exclusive product of nineteenth century inventiveness. So far removed from the environments of those days, it were impossible for us to pass upon the absolute merits of the case. There must have been valid reasons on both sides, since we find Saint Chrysostom and Saint Augustine in opposite camps. Saint Jerome, though brought up in similar schools himself, and although it has been said of him that "he read Cicero while he fasted and devoured Plautus whilst he bewailed his sins," was at first opposed to the idea, and denounced it in no very measured

terms. Subsequently, however, he seems to have veered, and, notwithstanding his resolution to eschew pagan literature and its cultivation, we find him in his old age teaching the classics and making his monks copy the "Dialogues of Cicero," while, as we also read, he carried with him on his journey to Jerusalem a copy of Plato, so as not to lose time on the road. Saint Chrysostom, who had every facility for acquiring a full knowledge of the character of the schools in question, and would certainly have been the last to underrate literary accomplishment, sums up his views in an eloquent passage, whose appositeness at all times will be our apology for quoting it at length. "If you have masters amongst you," he writes, "who can answer for the virtue of your children, I should be very far from advocating your sending them to a monastery; on the contrary, I should strongly insist on their remaining where they are. But if no one can give such a guarantee, we

ought not to send children to schools where they will learn vice before they learn science, and where, in acquiring learning of relatively small value, they will lose what is far more precious, their integrity of soul. . . . . Are we, then, to give up literature? you will exclaim. I do not say that, but I do say we must not kill souls. . . . . When the foundations of a building are sapped, we should seek rather for architects to reconstruct the whole edifice than for artists to adorn the walls. In fact, the choice lies between two alternatives—a liberal education, which you may get by sending your children to the public schools, or the salvation of their souls, which you get by sending them to the monks. Which is to gain the day, science or the soul? If you can unite both advantages, do so by all means; but if not, choose the most precious."[1] Golden words, truly, from a golden mouth! "If you can unite both advantages, do so

1 *Chrys. Op.*, vol. i., pp. 115-122, Ed., Gaume. Quoted from *Christian Schools and Scholars*, p. 19.

by all means," furnishes us, likely, with the keynote of the situation as it was in actual practice. It was not the intention of either party to forego the benefits accruing from the study of pagan classics, when that study was conducted with due caution. That they were at one on the subject properly understood was made apparent when Julian the Apostate, A.D. 362, issued his decree inhibiting to Christians the study of pagan authors even in private, hypocritically observing that since they cared nothing for the divinities and precepts of paganism, they could spend their time much more usefully in the perusal of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Forgetful for the nonce of their own differences, the Christians rallied to a unit in their opposition to it, with Saint Augustine, Saint Basil, and particularly Saint Gregory Nazianzen, who had been a classmate of Julian's, in the forefront. So crushing was the antagonism developed that Valentinian, a successor of Julian, was driven to

revoke it. As long as it was in operation the early fathers and doctors, in their zeal for classical instruction, wrote imitations of the Greek and Latin models for school purposes, that youth might not be altogether deprived of the advantages which only the classics could afford. Gregory Nazianzen alone, we are informed, wrote 30,000 lines of verse for class exercise. This speaks for itself, and, to say the least, may be assumed as a qualification of Hallam's statement that the decline of Latin literature, in the fourth and fifth centuries, was largely due to the fact that "a dislike of pagan learning was pretty general among Christians." Such a statement will meet with little credence from those who recall the galaxy of classical scholars who figured in the Church during the period in question, and who have taken their position in the world of letters, to be read and heralded long after Mr. Hallam and his attempts at history have been forgotten. Gregory of Neo-Caesarea, Basil of

Cappadocia, Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzum, Jerome, Chrysostom of Antioch, and Augustine of Hippo, are a few of the luminaries who shone in that age in which we are asked to believe that Christians were hostile to the cultivation of the classics. We are not unaware that they did oppose the study of pagan literature in schools, and that the Church even formulated adverse decrees upon the subject; but the teaching so antagonized was such as had no safeguard or saving quality, a fact which, like many another fact, Mr. Hallam and his set too readily overlook. Thus, though the public schools afforded new opportunities for the acquisition of secular learning, and in many ways were a benefit to the early Church, and as such were frequented and defended by many of her most renowned children, yet, as they were tainted with paganism and remained so until their final extinction in the sixth century under Justinian, or maybe later, it is

impossible to trace through them the line of direct Christian educational development. Accordingly, we must seek for it elsewhere.

While the schools of the Empire fell a prey to the universal decline and destruction which swept everything before them, or lived on, as some will have it in the case of a few, through the turmoil of centuries as a scarcely discernible link in the chain of historical occurrences, the Episcopal and Monastic schools, which had arisen under very different auspices and had quite other missions in the providence of God, continued to thrive—at first in secret and later in the broad light of day, and always in close touch with the widening conditions of human life and affairs. We have seen how the earliest bishops of the Church, and even the Apostles, converted their houses into schools for the education of aspirants to the ministry. The custom, far from becoming obsolete, was universally prevalent during the first centuries, and some of the most

venerated names of Christian antiquity are those of men who had been brought up after this fashion. Saint Chrysostom, Saint Cyril and Saint Athanasius may be mentioned as cases in point. The earliest authentic decretal, that of Pope Siricius, issued in 385, as well as later pronouncements by other Pontiffs, alludes to them, and leaves no doubt that they were conducted under proper ecclesiastical supervision. The introduction, in the fourth century, of the monastic life from the East, where it had long flourished, into the West, added new features to the already existing Episcopal or Cathedral schools. The community life which they practised assumed a more regular form. The bishop's residence became a sort of monastery in this sense, that the students who made his house their home and school were brought up on strict and well-defined lines of religious discipline. The bishop taught them in person. Where that was not possible he employed a substitute, usually a cleric. When

the number of scholars in attendance became unwieldy, as sometimes happened, the church was devoted to class purposes, the students still continuing to reside under the same roof with the bishop. Saint Augustine at Hippo; Saint Ambrose at Milan and Saint Eusebius at Arles had flourishing Episcopal schools of this description, which became renowned in history for the excellence of their training and the general patronage which they commanded. With time their curriculum, meagre at first and confined to ecclesiastical studies, was extended until it embraced not merely such branches as were needful for the state of life contemplated, but such others, also, as went to make up a liberal education as then understood. Everything, in fact, that was taught in the municipal schools was included in their program as far as it was at all available for Christian use. For instance, the famous school attached to the Cathedral of Seville and established by Saint Leander, the bishop,

and perfected by his brother and successor, Saint Isidore, A. D. 630, had a staff of Latin, Greek and Hebrew professors, and, in imitation of the imperial schools, taught mathematics, law and medicine. Yet, whatever may have been their number, whatever may have been their proficiency, like the civil schools, they fell a prey to the vicissitudes of the times and disappeared. Difficult, nay impossible as it is to trace their history in unbroken sequence through the turbulent period of the fourth and fifth centuries, when the process of universal social and political disintegration had set in, yet the occasional glimpses which we catch of them through the intervals of gathering gloom are more than sufficient to assure us that they were still at work in the cause of learning, and that at a juncture when all seemed hopelessly lost. In these Episcopal institutions we behold the germ of what was to become the Seminary of later days. At what precise moment after their re-establishment they began to be

mally recognized and legislated as seminaries by the Church is olly uncertain. The first intima- n of any decree on the subject ms to be that of the second uncil of Toledo, issued A.D. 531. provisions are detailed and ample, much so that we cannot but be- ve that Episcopal schools, even an- ior to that date, had been looked on as seminaries, in our modern derstanding of the term.[1]

1 We will give, at the risk of anticipating, Cardi- Newman's brief *resumé* of the subject in hand: seminaries," he says, "are so necessary to the rch, they are one of its earliest appointments. rcely had the New Dispensation opened, when, wing the example of the schools of the Temple of the Prophets under the Old, Saint John is re- led, over and above the public assemblies of the ıful, to have had about him a number of students m he familiarly instructed; and as time went power was given to the Church this school for esiastical learning was placed under the roof of Bishop. In Rome especially, where we look for pattern to which other churches are to be con- ıed, the clergy, not of the city only, but of the rince, were brought under the immediate eye of Pope. The Lateran Church, his first Cathedral, a seminary attached to it, which remained there l the Pontificate of Leo the Tenth, when it was sferred into the heart of the city. The students red within the walls from the earliest childhood; they were not raised from minor orders till the of twenty, nor did they reach the priesthood fter the trial of many years. Strict as a monastic tiate, it nevertheless included polite literature in course, and a library was attached to it for use of the Seminarists. Here was educated, t the year 310, Saint Eusebius, afterward, in n times, the celebrated Bishop of Vercelli; and e dark age which followed it was the home from hood of some of the greatest Popes—Saint Greg-

Simultaneously with the development of Episcopal or Cathedral schools founded for clerics, we notice another growth in progress, namely, that of the monastic schools for the laity. Even the first solitaries of the desert at times received for instruction children committed to their training; and from the very birth of monasticism under Saint Anthony and Saint Pachomius provision had been made for the education of the young by the institution of what were known as the interior and exterior schools—the former intended for such as aspired to the monastic

ory the Second, Saint Paul the First, Saint Leo the Third, Saint Paschal and Saint Nicholas the First. This venerable seminary, called anciently the School of the Pontifical Palace has never failed. Even when the barbarians were wasting the face of Italy and destroying its accumulations of literature, the great Council of Rome, under Pope Agatho . . . could testify, not indeed to the theological science of the school in that miserable age, but to its faithful preservation of the unbroken teaching of revealed truth and of the traditions of the Fathers. In the thirteenth century we find it in a flourishing condition, and Saint Thomas and Albertus Magnus lecturing in its halls. Such a prerogative of perpetuity was not enjoyed elsewhere. Europe lay submerged under the waters of a deluge, and when they receded schools had to be re-founded as well as Churches." *Hist. Sket.*, vol. iii., p. 241. The baneful effect which the establishment of the Mediæval Universities, long years after, had upon the Seminaries, and the legislation of the Council of Trent regarding them, will be a subject of later remark.

life, the latter for those who entertained no such idea, but could not or would not, because of the danger, avail themselves of the advantages of the State Schools, or of the private "Adventure Schools," of which there were many. Saint Basil, like Pachomius before him, allowed children to be received into the monasteries to be educated, and laid down rules for their proper government. The passage just cited from Saint Chrysostom shows that monastery schools were common in his day, A.D. 344, and in high repute. When monasticism passed from the East to the West, among the traditions which it retained was that of schools. This transition dates from the advent of Saint Athanasius to Rome, A.D. 340. Having been frequently exiled by Constantine and Constantius because of his stanch defense of the Divinity of Jesus Christ against the Arians, he spent much of his time in the Thebaid. There he met the early Cenobites, and familiarized himself with their practices. Coming to Rome,

he circulated a report of what he had witnessed in the desert, and wrote the life of Saint Anthony, with whom he had conversed.[1] The Romans, weary with centuries of bloodshed and dissipation, listened with anxious avidity to the recital, and multitudes, even of the nobility, embraced the life which he had been the first to proclaim in their midst. The idea grew, as fruitful ideas must, and ere many years had elapsed Italy teemed with monasteries, whose erection was largely due to the zeal of Eusebius, Bishop of Vercelli, who, like Athanasius, had been exiled from the East for his bold advocacy of the truth. Inspired by the writings of Athanasius, and burning to emulate him, Saint Martin of Tours introduced monasticism from Italy into Gaul, A.D. 360, by the establishment of the Monasteries of Ligugé and Marmoutier, in which latter retreat the Apostle of Ireland had his lips cleansed with the coal of fire which

[1] It is to this life that Saint Augustine so feelingly alludes in his *Confessions*, B. viii., c. 6.

kindled the faith in the land of saints and scholars. Germanus and Lupus in Britain, Ninian in Scotland, Patrick in Ireland, Cassian in Marseilles, Honoratus in Lerins, are all suggestive of the rapid dissemination of monastic life in western Europe, and, by inference, of cloistral schools, its invariable accompaniment, and that even prior to the time when educational work in the West fell entirely into the hands of the Church. It is not difficult to perceive that the monastic schools were the real channels that preserved intact the truths of Christianity, and a vast improvement, at the moment of their all but total extinction, upon anything that had preceded. They effected with less brilliancy but greater security what the Alexandrians had accomplished, but were unable to perpetuate, the fusion of Christian learning with pagan lore. How they would have prospered had they flourished in tranquility it were difficult to say ; but, like everything else, they were doomed to suffer from the stress of the times.

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peared, and the cloistral schools were all but annihilated. The evil, with no force to check it, increased until the overthrow of the Emperor Augustulus, A.D. 476, by Odoacer, chief of the Heruli, announced the downfall of the Western Empire. The hour of midnight had struck, and whatever random light still flickered in the firmament of letters only emphasized the darkness while hastening to its own speedy and ominous setting. As we gaze upon the desolate situation, and contrast the widely different fates of the pagan and Christian schools, we are reminded of the words of M. Guizot, spoken of the two systems in general: "The activity and intellectual strength of the two societies," he says, "were prodigiously unequal. With its institutions, its professors, its privileges, the one was nothing and did nothing; while, with its simple ideas, the other incessantly labored and seized upon everything."[1] Yes, the Church seized upon whatever learn-

1 *History of Civilization*, vol. i., p. 361 *et seq.*

ing remained, and kept diligent watch over it throughout the carnage and confusion which followed. Her monastic schools, though many had been destroyed and all were jeopardized, continued their work. Like the bird which flees before the gathering storm and seeks refuge in the quiet and retired depths of some leafy covert until the clouds are dissipated and it can once more preen its wings for another and more auspicious flight, what was left of education took shelter in the monasteries, which were now scattered up and down the length and breadth of Europe—in England, in Ireland, in Germany; in Wales, in France, in Spain, in Italy, in Scotland—everywhere—there to await the glad summons of its resurrection to a broader and more efficient field of enterprise. How it fared throughout its centuries of retirement, and what promises it held in deposit of that future civilization of which we are to-day so boastful, will be the purpose of a subsequent chapter to describe.

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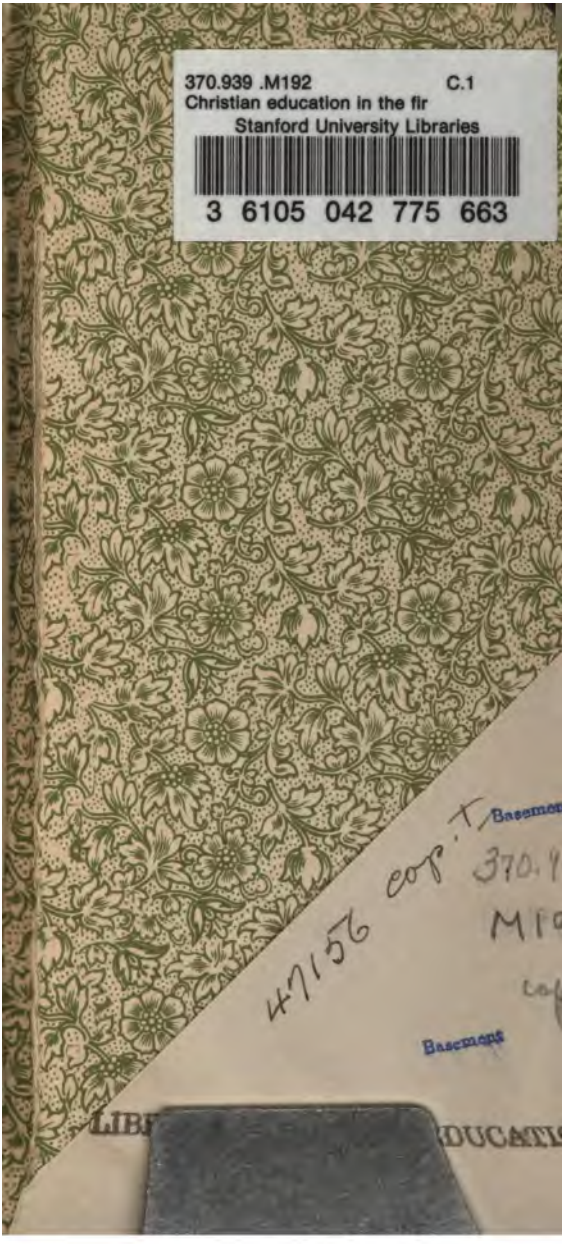
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